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# Grade 9-12: Help Haiti

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**School:**

Eldorado Middle School

**The Purpose and Essential Questions:**

Our questions were:

1. How can we best help Haiti? 2. How can we help our isolated rural community understand the need to help Haiti? 3. How can we get every aspect of our town involved in the process? 4. How can we teach others about Haiti?

**The Story:**

As a teacher using service-learning for 19 years, I was doing everything but stand on my head to try and get this class of eighth graders to choose a relevant project. When the Haiti earthquake hit the news, my class, like a benevolent sleeping giant, sprung into action. The disaster occurred on Tuesday, my students came in talking about it on Wednesday, on Thursday, they asked to devote both periods of their ELA block to a project, and, on Friday, they worked exclusively on their action plan. Normally, a service-learning project takes at least a week to research, to decide on need, to determine partners. Not this one---in a total of six periods, 36 teens had created a plan to raise needed funds for Haiti.

**Service-Learning Theme(s) and Community Need****Service-Learning Themes:**

AIDS Awareness and Education  
Emergency Readiness  
Environment  
Immigration  
Literacy and Mentoring  
Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty  
Safe and Strong Communities  
Social Change

**Community Need:**

The community need this experience addressed is getting help to Haiti as quickly as possible. Although this is a global need, our community need that was addressed was helping our community value the actions of youth.

**Community Partners:**

Obviously, the school participated. However, it was not just our middle school campus: it was the entire district. Furthermore, other districts who came to our basketball games participated as students raised awareness at these games and collected money. On the weekend, the students took the message to their churches, raising even more funds for Haiti. One student mobilized the local hospital to help our cause.

**Place of Impact:**

School  
Local Community  
Global  
Virtual

**School Setting, Grade Level and Duration****School Setting:**

Rural

**Grade Level:**

K-3 (Early Elementary)  
4-6 (Upper Elementary)  
6-8 (Middle School)  
9-12 (High School)

**Target Population:**

All Students  
Youth with Special Needs  
Youth at Risk of Dropping Out

**Duration:**

5-9 weeks

## Connection to Curriculum

### Academic Subjects:

English Language Arts

### State Standards:

TX

### Subject:

English Language Arts and Reading

### Definition:

form and revise questions for investigations, including questions arising from readings, assignments, and units of study

### Content Areas of major themes of study:

Because this experience developed in the English Language Arts and Reading classroom, the majority of the project took place within that setting. However, the students learned about earthquakes in science, the history of Haiti and its ties to the US in social studies, and the effects of poverty on health in physical education.

### Skills being introduced or developed:

Again, the majority of the experience took place in the ELA classroom, so skills within reading, writing, listening, and speaking were both introduced and developed. Students were already entrenched in a unit about persuasion, so the lessons they learned in that area helped them as they went out into the community asking for assistance for Haiti

### Books, Media, Websites, and other Resources:

Many of the websites used were national and international newsfeeds designed to allow the students to know what was occurring in Haiti as a result of the devastation. The others we accessed were as follows: <http://www.yele.org/> [1] <http://www.studentsagainsthunger.org/uploads/48/ac/48acfcceb609810d62ad4...> [2] <http://www.mercycorps.org/haiti> [3] <http://imaginepeace.com/news/archives/9431> [4] <http://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressrelease/2010-01-13/large-earthqua...> [5] <http://maps.google.com/maps?hl=en&q=haiti&sourceid=navclient-ff&rlz=1B3G...> [6] <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html#> [7] <http://www.haiti.org/> [8] [http://www.whatisleft.org/lookie\\_here/2010/01/six-ways-you-can-help-in-h...](http://www.whatisleft.org/lookie_here/2010/01/six-ways-you-can-help-in-h...) [9] And a suggestion from Cathryn Berger Kaye, Consultant to GoToServiceLearning: There is a novel, BEHIND THE MOUNTAINS by Edwidge Danticat that is excellent from teens to get a perspective on the countries history from a Haitian girl whose life and family is threatened in the polical uprisings of October 2000. While the book is out of print, your school library may have copies and used copies can be found online.

### Career-Related Learning:

public speaking, writing for a purpose, health professions, technology professions

## Five Stages of Service-Learning (Procedure)

### **Investigation:**

Investigation in this experience was fast and furious. The whirlwind of information changed by the minute. The students took the websites above as well as others they found to build understanding.

### **Reflection:**

Reflection happened mainly through discussion, often in pairs.

### **Preparation and Planning:**

Students sent a representative from each classroom to talk to their classmates about their plan of action. This happened in one day...not typical of most projects in service-learning. With the guidance of their ELA teacher, they solicited help from key people in the district as well as a parent who came to speak to the kids about Haiti. This father had served in Haiti while actively serving in the US Marine Corps.

### **Reflection:**

Students journaled their thoughts throughout the process and wrote letters and cards to those serving on the ground in Haiti.

### **Action:**

The largest part of this project is raising money to send to Haiti. At basketball games, bake sales, churches, and other functions in the community, the students raised the community's awareness and raised money for the effort. They also served as ambassadors for a country few people knew about or, sadly, had any interest in until the hurricane struck.

### **Reflection:**

Once again, journaling provided the majority of the reflection piece. One group of students created a video, while another created a graphic comic depiction of our experience.

### **Reflection:**

After the week finished, the students came together as an entire class and shared what they had accomplished. A video presentation was played showing them at work throughout the week.

### **Demonstration:**

The students will present their service-learning experience to the local school board and possibly other groups.

### **Reflection:**

Again, a video will capture their experiences.

**Public Relations:**

One student talked to the local radio station to set up a PSA for our drive. Others talked to city and county officials about Haiti.

**Assessment and Evaluation:**

Student assessment will be based primarily on public speeches given, work getting the word out, and an editorial placed in the local newspaper.

**Lessons Learned and Next Steps:**

As I stated earlier, I felt I had tried everything to get this group of students to come up with a relevant service-learning experience. This particular project was much like one after Hurricane Katrina in which my class rallied together to make childrens' books for the children affected by the hurricane. This was a call to action. The students heard the call and delivered.

**About the Teacher:**

Katrina Gonzales has been in education for 23 years, teaching at all levels. Her passions are social studies, reading, and teaching students whose first language is not English. She has utilized service-learning every year since 1991 in her classrooms. Service-learning experiences provide all students with rich, positive experiences; however, Katrina sees the biggest value in the students who are in danger of dropping out, who are disenfranchised, who feel they have no place in the school setting. It is this population of students who grow and thrive through service-learning experiences.

**About the School:**

Eldorado Middle School is the only middle school in our district, with our elementary and high schools located on the same block. It is a rural community, with a 65% Hispanic population, the rest being Anglo, except for a very small percentage of Black and Asian.

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**Links:**

[1] <http://www.yele.org/>

[2] <http://www.studentsagainsthunger.org/uploads/48/ac/48acfceeb609810d62ad452b6d20c6d4/Haiti->

Response\_toolkit.pdf

[3] <http://www.mercycorps.org/haiti>

[4] <http://imaginepeace.com/news/archives/9431>

[5] <http://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressrelease/2010-01-13/large-earthquake-haiti>

[6] [http://maps.google.com/maps?hl=en&q=haiti&sourceid=navclient-ff&r1z=1B3GGG\\_enUS306US306&safe=active&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=N&tab=wl](http://maps.google.com/maps?hl=en&q=haiti&sourceid=navclient-ff&r1z=1B3GGG_enUS306US306&safe=active&um=1&ie=UTF-8&sa=N&tab=wl)

[7] <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ha.html#>

[8] <http://www.haiti.org/>

[9] [http://www.whatisleft.org/lookie\\_here/2010/01/six-ways-you-can-help-in-haiti.html](http://www.whatisleft.org/lookie_here/2010/01/six-ways-you-can-help-in-haiti.html)